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The Anatomy of Dime Novels

No. 18 The Alamo and the Mexican War

By J. Edward Leithead



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BEADLE'S DIME NOVELS

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The Anatomy of Dime Novels

No. 18 The Alamo and the Mexican War

By J. Edward Leithead

One would suppose that the Mexican War, the Texan War of Independence and the Battle of the Alamo, abounding in thrilling incidents and all part and parcel of the same general conflict, resulting in much territorial acquisition by the United States, would have been a bonanza for dime novelists and inspired them to produce at least a couple of hundred novels on this many-sided subject. But research shows that there were less than a hundred, and the titles and the publishers were as follows:

Beadle's Dime Novels, issued semi-monthly, salmon color covers, pocket size—#307, *The Death's Head Rangers. A Tale of the Lone Star State.* By Frederick Whittaker.

Beadle's New Dime Novels, issued semi-monthly, color covers, pocket size—#333, *The Texan Scout* or, *The Jarocho's Sister.* By Harry Hazard. (A Spanish-English dictionary defines "jarocho (Mex. coll.) a rough, stout countryman" while a dime novel at hand states "Mexican Jarocho, or guerrillas, irregular troops in warfare") and #469, *Tippy the Texan, or The Young Champion. A Story of the Siege of Monterey.* By George Gleason.

Munro's Ten Cent Novels, black-and-white covers, pocket size—#124, *Texas Joe, or, Army Life on the Frontier.* By Captain Latham C. Carleton (Edward S. Ellis) and #140, *The Wild Ride. A Romance of Mexico.* By Captain Mayne Reid.

Irwin's American Novels

#29, *Inez. A Tale of the Mexican War.* Anonymus.

American Tales

#70, *The Texan Spy, or, The Prairie Guide.* By Newton M. Curtis.

De Witt's Ten Cent Romances

— *The Texan Ranger.* By Prof. J. H. Ingraham.

#54, *The Mexican Bravo, or, The Fair Maiden's Rescue.* Sequel to *The Texan Ranger.* By Prof. J. H. Ingraham. #55, *The Outlaw's Sister. Continuation of The Outlaw's Bride.* By Chris Forrest.

Army and Navy Library

(Street & Smith)

#11, *The Lone Star of Texas, or, The Fight for Liberty. A Grand Story of the Struggle for Independence.* By General E. Morse. #26, *Firebrand, or, A Trio of Heroes. A Rousing Story of War on Land and Sea.* By Major Walter Wilmot.

Campfire Library (Street & Smith)

#63, *The Lone Star Rangers, or, Wild Life Along the Rio Grande. A Great Story of the Mexican War.* By Captain McKeen.

Boys' Star Library (Frank Tousey)

#297, *Headless, or, The Man of Mystery. A Tale of the Mexican War.* By Ralph Morton. Reprinted from *Young Men of America* #3-11.

Wide Awake Library (Frank Tousey)

#588, *Hugo, the Texan, or, The Demons of the Alamo. A Tale of the Lone Star State in Davy Crockett's Days.* By J. R. Scott. #711, *The Haunted Pioneer, or,*

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Fighting for Texas. By Nona. #718, Old Rough and Ready, or, The Heroine of Monterey. By Nona. #729, Davy Crockett's Vow, or, His Last Shot for Vengeance. By Kit Clyde.

Beadle's Dime Library

#213, The War Trail, or, The Hunt of the Wild Horse. By Captain Mayne Reid. #448, Hark Kenton, the Traitor, or, The Hunted Life. A Romance of Two Generations. By Dangerfield Burr (Prentiss Ingraham).

Pluck and Luck (Frank Tousey)

#171, The Lone Star, or, The Masked Riders of Texas. A Story of the Texan Revolution. By Paul Braddon. Reprinted from Boys of New York #711-719. Reprinted 973 PL. #359, Captain Ray, the Young Leader of the Forlorn Hope. A True Story of the Mexican War. Reprinted from Young Men of America #417-426. Reprinted 1160 PL. #511, Branded a Traitor, or, Boy Rivals in Love and War.

All Around Weekly (Frank Tousey)

#30, Virginia Dick, or, A Southern Boy in the Mexican War. #59, Bravest of the Brave. A Story of the Mexican War.

Brave and Bold (Street & Smith)

#241, Dashing Tom Bexar, or, The Adventures of Taylor's Young Scout. By John De Morgan.

So far as I've been able to learn, although there are numerous Davy Crockett items among dime novels, his last stand at the Alamo with other heroes of deathless fame has been skimmed over except for an issue of Wide Awake Library, #588, Hugo, the Texan, or, The Demons of the Alamo. A Tale of the Lone Star State in Davy Crockett's Days, and another possible issue of Wide Awake, #729, Davy Crockett's Vow, or, His Last Shot for Vengeance. As no copy of the latter is available to me to check, I can only hazard a guess from the title that it may concern the defense and fall of The Alamo, but I am certain of the former, #588, and wish to quote from it here, as that famous but terribly one-sided battle has

always seemed one of the most heroic in history, a prelude if not a contributing factor to the Mexican War.

The sub-title of this novel—the black-and-white cover shows two frontiersmen in buckskin and a Comanche Indian in a war bonnet defending an angle of the fortress, while one Dolores Davrill crouches against the wall—"The Demons of the Alamo" doesn't refer to the inmates but to the attackers, General Santa Anna and his army. Dolores, of course, is an imaginary character, but there WAS a young woman trapped in the Alamo with her husband, an American lieutenant. She escaped death. But most of the people in this novel are real, and it opens with a summary of the situation in Texas at that time:

"The San Antonio River flows through the most fertile and beautiful portions of Texas. Upon the banks of this stream, in the year 1836, a few adventurous Americans, mostly from the Southern or Gulf States, had established themselves with their families.

"At this date Mexico still claimed Texas as part of the Spanish possessions in America, but the Mexican government, by its colonization laws, invited the Anglo-American population of Texas to colonize its wilderness under the pledged faith of a written constitution, that they should enjoy that liberty, and republican government, to which they had been habituated in the land of their birth, the United States of America.

"The Mexicans had now broken faith with the Americans.

"General Santa Anna, having overturned the constitution of the Mexican government, now offered the American settlers of Texas the cruel alternative, either to abandon their homes acquired by so many privations or submit to the most intolerable of all tyranny, the despotism of the sword.

"This the gallant American settlers of Texas had refused to do, and General Sam Houston, Colonels Travis, Bowie, "the Knife King," Fannin and

Davy Crockett (who, disgusted with the turn political affairs had taken at home, had journeyed to Texas, with the avowed intention of taking part in the struggle for Texan independence) were the leaders of the American forces.

"The fight for the freedom of the "Lone Star State" was at its height. In December of the preceding year, 1835, General Bureson, in command of the Texan armed forces, had captured the town of San Antonio, on the river of the same name, and situated at a distance of about one hundred and forty miles from the coast.

"The Mexican forces in the town numbered seventeen hundred men, while the Texan forces consisted of but two hundred and sixteen. The Mexicans had marched up the streets leading to the plaza or public square, intending to make a desperate resistance; the Texans, however, made an entrance and drove them from house to house until General Cos, the Mexican commander, retreated to the fortress of the Alamo, without the city, and there hoisted the white flag.

"This defeat rankled in the breasts of the Mexicans, and General Santa Anna vowed to retake the Alamo and exterminate its American defenders."

One of the real life characters who is given special prominence in this story (I am glad to see, since he so often isn't mentioned in accounts of the siege of the Alamo) is Deaf Smith, the scout. The author says, "Deaf Smith turned at the sound of Hugo's voice, precisely like one who had heard a welcome sound. Could it be as some hinted that Deaf Smith was not really deaf, but that he only pretended it, the better to deceive his enemies—was this deafness but a cunning ruse? The question has never been clearly answered, and the secret was probably known to but two men, Smith himself and General Sam Houston."

Edward S Ellis, a writer who never failed to accord the buckskin fraternity, forest rangers, scouts and plainmen, the eminence due them in settling the frontier, East and West, introduced Deaf Smith as a character

in his Alamo Series—The Three Arrows and Remember the Alamo—published by Winston. And Joseph A. Altscheler has Deaf Smith a character in his Texan Series, especially the volume *The Texan Scouts*, published by Appleton.

Another character in the dime novel, *Red Spear*, a Comanche, could easily be a real Indian since at least one Indian, probably a scout, was almost certainly lined up with the defenders in that battle. "Red Spear," says the author, "had no less than thirteen Mexican scalps suspended by a buckskin thong about his waist and over his shoulder."

Of the last hours in defense of the Alamo, Author J. R. Scott writes:

"The historian informs us that the final attack upon the Alamo was made on the night of the sixth of March (1836). The assault was made by the entire Mexican army, commanded by Santa Anna in person. The fight raged until morning, when the Mexicans gained the interior of the Alamo, only to find six of the gallant Texans alive. These men surrendered under the promise of protection, for further resistance was madness. Davy Crockett was among the number who survived.

"From the history of his life we quote the following (no foot-note as to what source he refers): 'Crockett stood alone in an angle of the fort, the barrel of his shattered rifle in his right hand, in his left his bowie-knife dripping with blood. There was a frightful gash across his forehead, while about him there was a complete barrier of about twenty dead Mexicans lying pell-mell. At his feet lay the lifeless body of that well-known character, designated by the name of Thimblebrig, his knife driven to the hilt in the throat of a Mexican and his left hand clutched in his hair.

"Crockett was marched before Santa Anna with the other prisoners by General Castrillon, whose officers plunged their swords into the persons of the defenseless prisoners. Crockett, seeing this act of treachery, instantly sprang like a tiger at Santa Anna's throat; but before he could

reach the chief of these 'demons of the Alamo,' a dozen swords were sheathed in his powerful body and he fell dead."

And now the tale which is the feature of this piece:

Bravest of the Brave: A Story of the Mexican War, was serialized in #3-11 Young Men of America, with byline "Captain George Granville" (a pseudonym), reprinted as #182 Boys Star Library, and again, with colored cover, as #59 All Around Weekly, by "Harry Lakeland."

"The flower and the chivalry of Louisiana had gathered, and bright lights shone over fair women and brave men. It was the 30th of March. In one of the most beautiful halls in New Orleans there was assembled the very cream of her aristocratic society. No more beautiful women ever smiled, and no braver men ever breathed, than were drawn together to weave through the mazes of the waltz, the polka, the schottische, to chase the glowing hours with flying feet.

"While the revelry was at its height there came news of trouble on the Mexican border, the march of General Zachary Taylor upon the skirts of the enemy, and the call for volunteers. A messenger from the governor came hurriedly into the ballroom. He was in search of his excellency's aides, who were taking part in the festivities. Expectation had been on tip-toe for several days, and when he appeared he was quickly surrounded by a dozen brave fellows who eagerly asked for the news.

"Samuel Walker, a West Point graduate, was among the number. He was known to be a gallant young fellow, very personable, but, not being affluent nor belonging strictly to the New Orleans aristocracy, he was not what might have been termed a pampered son of society. He had only been back from West Point two months, and as yet had not been assigned to any regiment, although he left the military academy with a single gold bar on his shoulder-straps.

"There were several other West Point graduates present, some with

assignments and some without. They knew when the governor's messenger appeared on the floor of the ballroom that something unusual had happened, and he had hardly taken a dozen steps toward the spot where Captain Jefferson Davis (afterward President of the Southern Confederacy) stood, than all men in uniform forsook the dance and crowded anxiously around him.

"What is it, Tom?" asked one.

"We have lively news from the Rio del Norte," replied the messenger. "General Taylor with his little army has moved upon disputed soil and is even now threatened by the whole Mexican army."

"A thrill swept the listening throng.

"The general has sent to several States for volunteers, Louisiana among the rest, and you older officers and West Pointers are requested to report to him at once."

"A wild cheer rang through the hall, and the dancing was at an end. A concerted rush was made for the cloak-room by new West Pointers, seasoned army men and many who had never seen service but were interested in the quarrel between the United States and Mexico, this year of 1846 . . . Then there were leave-takings, sudden and most unexpected, and fair cheeks were pale that but a short time before were blushing at praise of their own loveliness . . .

"The steamer Golden was ready to sail the day following. She was a United States transport, and was taking out war material for the American army. Young Sam Walker's personal effects were soon packed, and as he had only a few friends to take a farewell of, he was quickly ready and on board the transport, where he was joined by other army officers.

"The distance between New Orleans and the mouth of the Rio Grande is something over six hundred miles, but in less than three days the good ship Golden reached Port Island. On the second day out, while he sat on deck a long, lanky Texas Ranger approached him. He was a fair specimen of those brave rough riders and opened up cheerfully with:

"Day, stranger."

"How are you, sir?" replied the young officer.

"My name's Elam Baxter, frontier battalion of the Rangers, been a-fightin' Injuns and outlaws from both sides of the border for the last fifteen years. You from the Point?"

"Lieutenant Walker said he was.

"Baxter beamed. 'You're goin' to join General Taylor, but listen: I know an outfit, first-class fighters all who need a trained commander. I was in New Orleans for weapons and things that are needed before ridin' to join Old Rough and Ready. I've got everything on board this boat. When we dock, you come along with me to Palo Alto and I'll show you near a hundred as fine Texas Rangers as ever forked a hoss or flipped a Comanche or a Mex. Volunteers for Taylor—how about it?"

"Not having been assigned to any command yet, the opportunity seemed good and Sam Walker accepted. These Rangers had made up their minds to offer themselves to General Taylor as a scouting company, and when Elam Baxter showed up with a real West Pointer, a formal meeting was held at once, a company book opened, every man's name written in it to the number of seventy-five, after which Sam Walker was formally elected captain and Baxter lieutenant." (It was customary, during the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War and the Civil War for volunteer companies that equipped themselves, even to horses, if they were cavalry, to elect their own officers).

"By nine o'clock they were ready to march to General Zachary Taylor's encampment at Port Island, and although they did not ride like trained cavalymen, yet each was mounted on a superb horse and could ride through and over almost anything. All they wanted was the polish Captain Walker could give them to become the first body of cavalry in the new army that was forming up.

"It was about noon when Captain Walker led his men before headquarters and reported himself to General Taylor, nicknamed 'Old Rough and

Ready.' 'But I did not come alone, sir,' Walker added.

"So much the better, captain; but surely you have not raised a company so soon?"

"Please step to the door, and see for yourself, general."

"With anxious curiosity depicted in his furrowed face the brave old hero did as requested, and there saw one of the finest companies of mounted riflemen he had ever beheld.

"Fine, captain, fine. But these are Texas Rangers—how came you in command of them?"

"Sam Walker related the circumstances to the general, who listened with close attention. 'Bravo, captain! Your men are the ones I want above all others, and you may hold yourself in readiness for orders at any moment.'

"The next few days were given over to training and perfecting the Rangers in cavalry evolutions, and being quick to learn and born-in-the-saddle riders, it did not take long to get them in good form. At the end of the third day, and before any of the other volunteers expected by General Taylor arrived, he sent for Captain Walker.

"Captain, you want dangerous work?"

"I do, sir."

"I have some for you. I need not tell you that my little army is split in two, and that we have to do some hard fighting to maintain our position. I am afraid that the garrison opposite Matamoras, under Major Brown, will be attacked and captured, this making my position worse than it is. The country between Point Isabel and there swarms with Mexicans. I cannot leave my position here, for a general movement of my whole force would bring twenty to my one down upon us. A small body would not alert more than a proportionate number of the enemy. I wish you to take three wagonloads of ammunition under your escort to Major Brown, together with these dispatches. March at once."

"Walker saluted and returned to his company of Rangers, before

whose quarters the three ammunition wagons were drawn up. Nimble-footed mules in harness, an army teamster waited by each wagon. In something under ten minutes the company had saddled up and mounted. Nearly every man except the captain had ridden over the ground to the distant fort, consequently neither maps nor guides were required.

"Precisely as expected, the Mexicans seemed to be aware of their movement as soon as they got outside the American lines, although the enemy evidently looked upon it as simply a scouting expedition and not a determined attempt to reinforce and replenish an almost exhausted outpost. For the previous few days a fierce bombardment had been going on between the batteries before Matamoras and the fortress on the other side of the river, but, Major Brown's ammunition being nearly used up, he was replying only at intervals to the Matamoras guns.

"Believing the Rangers were only a scouting party, the Mexican commander sent Colonel Canales, a renowned robber who had joined the army for the sake of plunder, to watch the Americanos, he having about two hundred of the worst lads to be found in Mexico. Canales undoubtedly possessed some military talent, although he was a robber by nature and profession, and no stranger to many of the Texans, who had met him in border fights several times. He soon learned the strength of Walker's band and pretended to retreat before them, for the purpose of drawing them into a blind canyon, where he could turn upon and annihilate them at his leisure.

"I know what his game is," spoke up Lieutenant Elam Baxter, after they had followed Canales' dust three or four hours. "Two miles this side Fort Brown there's a ravine, wide and deep. We had a brush with them buscaderos during the Texas fight ag'in 'em and it's a bad place. A wide road leads in, but only a narrow path leads out at the far end. If Canales coaxes us in—"

"But he won't get us in there, lieu-

tenant," said Walker, whose keen eye was taking in everything. "There must be a road to right or left of this one, and even if it's not so good we'll take it."

"Right, captain, there is a road this side."

"Then we'll let Canales think we are following him into this trap. Give me as good a description as you can of the locality, Elam."

"As they rode, Baxter explained the ravine and everything about it, a few Rangers having been sent ahead to press the Mexicans. Even while they were speaking Walker and Baxter saw the foremost enemy riders disappear down the road slant leading to the narrow end. The noise of the cannonading at Matamoras shook the earth as the Rangers trotted onward.

"Quick! Charge them to the mouth of the trap, and then rejoin us!" Captain Walker cracked out, and away pounded Lieutenant Baxter with some thirty hard-bitten Texans.

"Walker drew alongside the lead wagon. 'That way,' he pointed out the road to take with drawn saber, 'and pour in the leather!'

"The teamsters' whips cracked like pistol shots and the mules lunged into collars. They hit a gallop, turning to the right, took another road which led directly to the fort, although, like all roads in that part of the country, it was a very bad one. It was fortunate, perhaps, that no part of the cargo was dynamite, although dynamite is sometimes unpredictable and might have jounced safely through.

"By the time the flying wagons got past the curve which led down into the ravine, Baxter's detachment was returning, having driven the rear-guard of Col. Canales' force against the front ranks and causing great confusion.

"Sergeant Bolton," rapped Captain Walker, standing in his stirrups, 'return with twenty-five men and make a demonstration that will keep them there. Avoid fighting as long as possible, for the wagons must reach the fort.

"Lieutenant Baxter, ride with twenty men and occupy that narrow path leading from the ravine on the other side. Hold it, and we have them caught in their own trap."

"The two detachments wheeled away at a fast trot, and Walker, sheathing the saber in his hand, put spurs to his horse and rode to overtake the wagoners, beclouded with dust from fast turning wheels and racing mule teams and the driving hoofs of the Ranger escort. The fort was already in sight, but it was not replying to the tremendous shower of shot and shell from Matamoras and was evidently out of ammunition.

"This nerved Sam Walker to do his utmost. He hastily dispatched couriers to each of the detachments with orders to hold the enemy in the ravine as long as possible, and then to ride at full speed for Fort Brown. Col. Canales was completely trapped. Bolton held the entrance, Baxter the exit, to the ravine. The Mexican brigand was not long in finding out the mistake he had made; and before he and his men could escape from their own trap and hope to take the Texans in the rear, the ammunition train had reached the depleted stockade.

"Never was succor welcomed with wilder acclaim. Never were heroes of a bloodless victory more highly honored than were the Texas Rangers turned cavalymen and their skilful captain by the forlorn command at Fort Brown. With wild hurrahs from the soldiers, the American gunners again sprang to their guns and reopened fire upon the Mexicans on the opposite shore. Evidently the latter were very much astonished, for they had been aware for a long time of the scarcity of powder in Fort Brown's magazine, believing it was only a question of time until the Americans surrendered.

"Captain Walker stood on the parapet of Fort Brown and watched the effect of the shots from the guns. The Rangers were calmly grooming their horses in the compound and getting ready for the next move, whatever it might be. The very earth was shaking with the fierce cannonade.

"Presently there came a fainter boom of cannon from the direction of Point Isabel. This indicated a move on the part of General Taylor. With agitated heart, Captain Sam Walker uncased his field-glasses. By the aid of the glass he could see Mexican infantry marching in the direction of the Point, and the gaily caparisoned Mexican lancers spurring their mettlesome horses toward the seat of conflict.

"Walker, facing around toward the compound, cupped his hands and shouted to his men, 'Saddle up!'

"While the Rangers moved to obey, wondering what the order portended, again the distant thunder of artillery shook the earth and in the north arose clouds of sulphurous smoke. Lieutenant Elam Baxter mounted the wall to the young captain's side.

"What is it, cap?"

"I think General Taylor has either attacked the enemy at Palo Alto, or they have attacked him."

"That's as true as grass," Elam squinted at the mushrooming cannon smoke.

"And we must have a hand in it. Old Rough and Ready may need us!"

"As they descended from the watchtower, a ten-inch shell whistled over their heads and fell close to a gun, by the side of which stood Major Brown. It exploded as it struck and the gallant soldier fell in his tracks. Captain Walker and Lieutenant Baxter sprang to his side and bore him to a grassy mound. Once and only once he opened his eyes.

"Don't let them take the fort, boys," said he faintly, and then it was over.

"The next in command, Captain Flood, at once assumed it and the bombardment went on. Walker clanked toward his Rangers, stepped up on his horse, whose reins were held by Sergeant Bolton. 'Prepare to mount!' he shouted. 'Mount!' He waited a moment as booted legs swung across saddles. 'Men, the main army is having hot work at Palo Alto. Forward—ho!'

"The Fort Brown garrison cheered as the Rangers trotted through the stockade gateway to the open plain.

The Mexicans at Matamoras became so much interested in the struggle going on at Palo Alto that they ceased shelling devoted Fort Brown and mounting their works gazed into the distance, gesticulating over the sounds coming from the far battlefield.

"Captain Walker and his Rangers pushed their mounts hard in a dash for the mounting roar of conflict, and the wind wafted vast clouds of acrid smoke their way. As they drew nearer, some of the Rangers whooping Comanche style as was their wont when fighting the Comanches and Kiowas on the Staked Plains, they began to notice, through wind-shredded cannon and musket smoke, the gaudy trappings of Mexican horsemen speeding in the same direction, not a half mile ahead of the Texans.

"These Mexicans, although plunging forward with murderous lances poised and streamers fluttering in the sulphurous air, were somehow different from other lancers the Rangers knew well—it was their unmilitary formation, their seat in the saddle, crouched like a horse Indian about to let fly an arrow or a bullet beneath the arched neck of his scudding war pony. None of Mexico's finest ever rode in that fashion . . . It struck Lieutenant Elam Baxter who they were, none of General Arista's well-trained lancers but. Col. Canales' bandidos, playing soldier for purposes of plunder.

"Baxter yelled above the hoof thunder, the crash of musketry, the boom of artillery, 'Watch out ahead! That's Canales' cutthroats, loose from the ravine!'

"So it was. Col. Canales wasn't looking for an enemy in his rear at that time, but, crazy for a fight that would wipe out the defeat he had suffered at the hands of Captain Walker, he was leading his savage horde headlong into vengeful slaughter. Already General Taylor had driven off the opening onslaught of General Arista's forces—the Mexican army could use reinforcements.

"But Captain Walker and his Rangers were close upon the outlaw cavalry, and before a single lance had been hurled, saddles of the Canales

outfit began emptying at the crack of rifles from the rear. Rifles emptied, the Texans rushed to closer quarters with smoking six-shooters. Consternation had seized Col. Canales and his ladrons, especially when they recognized the formidable Texans who had circumvented them so neatly; but the Mexicans fought like tigers.

"Captain Walker's horse suddenly folded forelegs under him and hit the sod. Sam was in the thickest of the fight on foot, but laying about him with lightning strokes of his saber. Two of the Rangers saw his peril and rode to the rescue. But they were shot down just as Canales and one of his fierce henchmen galloped down on Walker.

"As one of the fallen Ranger's horses stumbled past him, Sam Walker grabbed its reins and hoisted himself into the saddle. The horse wasn't hurt, and the captain spurred between the fiery Mexican colonel and his men catching the sword of the former upon his own blade and seizing the lance of the latter below the spearpoint in gauntleted fist, deflecting the aim of both Mexicans simultaneously. Dashing sword and lance aside, he chopped at the colonel with his saber, missing as the Mexican flung forward on his horse's neck. Then Walker, his mount moving under the spur, was away, and wheeling in the saddle, sweeping Colt from unbuttoned holster, shot the lancer, who pitched from his rearing horse. Sam would rather have targeted Col. Canales, but in such a melee, with frightened and wounded horses adding to the confusion, there wasn't time to pick and choose . . .

"The quick eye of General Taylor had detected the turn in the tide of battle. He knew that the reinforcements of Col. Canales might have supported General Arista at a critical moment, but Captain Walker's Rangers had prevented that. Still, the Rangers were outnumbered and had suffered severe casualties. Old Rough and Ready dispatched Captain May to the assistance of the Walker forces, and the attack front and rear was too much, causing panic to spread in

the Mexican ranks.

"There followed one of the wildest scenes ever witnessed on a battlefield. All discipline was lost, and officers and men, cavalry, infantry and artillery, became crowded together, each struggling for a chance to escape. The dead and wounded were trampled underfoot and, to add to the general terror, the long dry prairie grass caught fire, enveloping many in the fierce conflagration. The haughty Arista's army, which he had marched out to 'gobble up' the despised Americans was in full retreat, and the first battle of the Mexican War, Palo Alto, was won.

"As soon as the battle was over, General Taylor sent for Captain Walker. All torn and begrimed with smoke he presented himself at the headquarters tent and was at once shown to the commanding general, who arose and cordially extended his hand.

"Captain Walker, I have to thank you for taking it upon yourself to help me win this victory, without orders," said he.

"And I thank you, general, for giving us a hand when needed. Delivery of the ammunition to Fort Brown was made, sir, and I will make out my report tonight. The fort opposite Matamoras still flies the American flag, but, general, Major Brown has fallen."

"Major Brown killed! There's a brave soul gone," said Taylor sadly.

"Early the next morning the officers were astir, for General Taylor had summoned them to a council of war. Captain Walker was there with the others, having with him his completed report of the Fort Brown mission.

"Taylor's scouts reported the position of the enemy, and it was decided to move forward without delay. But there was nothing forced about it, for the soldiers seemed to welcome the prospect of again engaging the enemy and finishing the flogging they had begun the day before.

"Breakfast over and rations packed in knapsacks, the line of march was formed and at once moved toward Resaca de la Palma, where in the distance, even now, could be seen the

vanguard of the Mexicans hastening toward the chaparral. On approaching the chaparral, General Taylor became convinced that the enemy occupied it in force and another battle seemed inevitable. And to prepare for it the troops were halted near a convenient watering place, where they were allowed a season of repose.

"Meanwhile, Captain Walker, Captain May, Captain McCall, Captain C. F. Smith and a party of Rangers were ordered to advance and reconnoiter the enemy's position on the left, near the field of Resaca de la Palma, and after skirmishing, they found him. The position chosen by the Mexican army for the second day's battle was an admirable one for defensive warfare. It was an area of broken terrain about two hundred feet wide, and from four to six feet deep, being crossed at right angles by a road leading to Matamoras. The ridges on each side were covered with a dense growth of chaparral, utterly impenetrable to horse, and defying every weapon except the bayonet.

Lieutenant Elam Baxter, an expert scout and Indian tracker, succeeded in creeping near enough to look through the intervening chaparral, and found that the Mexicans lay in double rows in the thickets nearest the American lines, and that another line of them extended through the dwarf oak brush on the opposite bank. Three powerful batteries were placed so as to completely sweep the road, their lines of fire at the same time crossing each other.

"The battle ground presented a marked contrast to Palo Alto, where the fighting was in an open field, and through such a pass, defended by six thousand soldiers, must Taylor's little army of less than two thousand force its way if it were to reach Matamoras. But the doughty old hero had as much confidence in his men as they had in him, and never for a moment did officer or enlisted man hesitate; on the contrary they seemed restive and eager for the fray.

"Captains Smith and McCall were ordered to advance and bring on the action, which, from the first, seemed destined to be the artillery. It cannot

be said that the discipline of General Taylor's army was any better than that of General Arista's, but at length the superior bravery and dash of the Americans prevailed, and gradually, foot by foot, the Mexicans were driven with the bayonet through the chaparral, and forced to take refuge in a more distant and secure position.

"Cheer upon cheer was given by the Americans engaged, and re-echoed by their restless comrades who had not yet been ordered into the fight. Especially were the cavalry and the Texas Rangers anxious to take part in the battle. And yet the strife did not cease with the retreat of the Mexican infantry. The batteries still poured into the ranks of the American infantry a storm of iron hail, mowing down the brave fellows by scores, while on the very verge of victory.

"The eagle eye of General Taylor saw that the fate of the day hung upon these guns, and he hastily ordered Captain May, of the regular cavalry, and Captain Walker, of the Texas Rangers, to report to him. Two more eager young officers never spurred their horses to the trumpet's call.

"Old Rough and Ready swept an arm toward the Mexican stronghold. 'Charge those batteries!' he ordered. They both saluted and turned their horses to ride away. 'And take them!' he shouted after the departing captains.

"Captain May and his regulars took the lead, sabers flashing from scabbards and poised for the deadly thrust when in blade's reach of the enemy. Walker's Rangers followed closely, rifles at the ready, the combined command sweeping down on the batteries before the Mexican gunners could reload.

"Result—the guns were surrounded, the gunners scattered. But they were not disposed to submit tamely, and in a few moments rallied, supported by several companies of infantry who had hurried to their rescue with fixed bayonets to fend off the whirling horsemen with the slashing sabers and unerring rifles.

But how long could they—and the

infantry, too—stand before the fierce and repeated onslaughts of May's dragoons and Walker's cowboy cavalry. One by one they sank, and the batteries with their flags were securely the Americans'. Colonel La Vega was among the captured. He was struck at by Captain May, but, parrying the blow, called his cannoneers around him and was about to discharge one of the big guns himself when Captain Walker charged in and thrust saber point against his chest, ordering the colonel to surrender.

"What! to a boy! La Vega exclaimed fiercely.

"To Captain Walker, if you please,' replied the young officer, and with a glance at the shining blade whose point had penetrated the cloth of his uniform, Colonel La Vega grimaced and handed over his sword.

"Three separate and savage charges were made by Mexican infantry to regain the batteries, and Walker and May, with their own hands and assisted by dismounted dragoons, turned the guns upon the foot soldiers with such terrible effect that the attempt was abandoned.

"A fearful struggle was going on in other parts of the field, infantry, artillery and cavalry being engaged. A detachment under Lieutenant Woods actually forced their way into General Arista's command post and captured it after a bloody hand-to-hand fight. A company of lancers was sent to retake it, and they succeeded in doing so, killing Lieutenant Cochrane and twenty men, although the Americans rallied and drove them out.

"Three cheers for Hail Columbia, Yankee Doodle, Uncle Sam and General Zach Taylor!' yelled Lieutenant Elam Baxter, leaping upon a cannon he had helped to capture and swinging his hat.

"The battle was practically won now and Old Rough and Ready about to put the finishing touches to it. Captain Walker was ordered to charge a column of lancers which had stolen around to the Americans' right and was coming down like a whirlwind, all unheeding the shower of grape that was carrying destruc-

tion into their ranks. As the cannonading broke off, the Rangers rode to meet them, and although the Mexicans were three to one, the skill of Walker's riflemen soon bore fruit, and the lancers still upright in saddles fled toward Matamoras. The battle of Resaca de la Palma was won.

"The American army followed so closely upon the retreating army of General Arista that they could easily have slaughtered more of them had they not been ordered to cease firing and to camp on the shore of the Rio Grande, opposite the frightened and demoralized city of Matamoras.

"Captain Walker, however, was ordered to cross with his own men and supported by two companies of infantry, for the purpose of watching the maneuvers of the enemy, his landing and camp on the other side being protected by a battery of eighteen-pounders and the fort lower down. He selected companies A and B, Mississippi Volunteers, they being in better condition than any of the others, and without loss of time the crossing was effected and a lodgment made on undoubted Mexican soil, young Captain Walker being the first to plant the American flag there. The Mexicans at the moment were too disorganized to offer any resistance or opposition.

"About nine o'clock, after Walker's men had eaten supper, the horses had been cared for and the guards set, the alcalde of Matamoras came into camp under a flag of truce and asked for a detachment of soldiers to defend the wealthy citizens, in imminent danger of being pillaged, even murdered, by the guerrillas who were prowling about the city in quest of plunder. Some were Col. Canales' men, others were the outlaw band under Romano Falcon.

"Captain Walker declined to grant the request of the alcalde, as it exceeded his orders, but promised to communicate with General Taylor on the subject and follow his instructions.

"Goldarn my buttons, if they ain't eatin' each other up!" said Lieut. Baxter, after hearing of the petition.

"Wal, if their stomicks can stand it, we can."

"Sam Walker's courier returned from across the Rio Grande with this reply from headquarters:

"Captain Walker: Keep your eye on the enemy above all things; but use your own judgment regarding the affair you mentioned.

Z. Taylor."

"That settles it," said Walker, and he at once made arrangements for the security of his camp, putting Lieutenant Baxter in command, after which he selected twenty-five men from the Mississippi Volunteers and his own company to go with him into the heart of the city.

"As Walker rode into the plaza, the troop horses at a walk, he was approached by a most beautiful senorita, one of the lovely Spanish maidens of whom poets write and rave. Beautiful she was, yet her general appearance betokened extreme anguish and fear.

"Senor Americano," she cried, catching the bridle of Sam's horse, "we are being robbed and our lives threatened by ladrons; please come and defend us!"

"Where, senorita?"

"A hundred of them are pillaging our home just above here. Pity us, capitan," she pleaded, her lovely dark eyes as mournful as her tone.

"Will someone guide us to them?"

"I will, senor."

"But you are not mounted, and in this wild panic might be trodden underfoot and killed," said Sam, holding up his hand for those who followed to halt.

"But I can ride, capitan," said she archly, casting a glance at the seat behind his saddle.

"With me?"

"Si, capitan."

"Good! Your hand."

"Taking her by the hand and removing his foot from the stirrup, she lifted her own into it with ease and grace, and he drew her up to a seat behind the cantle.

"Can you ride there, senorita?"

"Si, senor. Spur on," said she, adjusting herself and placing one bare

white arm around his waist.

"Walker's horse moved under the spur and his gauntleted fist punched the air, 'Forward—ho!'"

"Except for directing him, scarcely a word passed between the beautiful Mexican girl and Sam Walker. The command followed its young leader through a wide square and into an avenue, tree-lined and with many stately houses, leading from it in a westerly direction.

"The troop had not gone far along this thoroughfare before spotting a band of fierce-looking guerrillas loaded with spoil and going from one big house to another, outraging the shrieking inhabitants of the locality, one of the best in Matamoras. A dwelling or two had been fired by the rascals to further intimidate the owners. Gun shots were occasionally heard above the tumult of human voices. Yells and curses greeted the ear as Sam Walker and his troop dashed on the scene, the infantrymen deploying across the wide avenue to cut off the looters who evaded the mounted Rangers.

"It's best you leave us here, *senorita*," said the young captain, his hand tightening on the rein.

"Si, capitan—muchas gracias," she said, leaping lightly down.

"I trust we may meet again."

"Si, si! Adios!" and she waved her hand, laden with a kiss, as Sam wheeled his horse away.

"Draw sabers! Charge!" Walker shouted, unsheathing his own blade with a steely swish and lightly rowelling his eager mount.

"Headlong they rode, and while the Rangers were not expert swordsmen and preferred rifle and six-shooter, a blade in the hand was surer of its mark in the star-shot dark than trying to draw bead on a moving target. They charged furiously upon the swarm of plunder-laden robbers who thronged the avenue, felling them on every side, drawing shots and hurled knives themselves with almost no fatalities. Those bandits who did not drop under the slashing steel threw down their booty and took to their heels crying:

"Americanos! Americanos!"

"In twenty minutes every *ladron* who had not been ridden down by the Rangers had fled the neighborhood, leaving most of their plunder behind. Beyond the outlaws' initial resistance before they recognized their attackers, scarcely any put up a stout fight, many of them abandoning their waiting horses.

"When all was over, Walker drew up his men in the middle of the avenue for the purpose of checking casualties, if any, and awaiting further events if the banditti rallied. He was standing beside his horse, pleased with the report of Sergeant Bolton regarding the condition of men and mounts, when he saw approaching the lovely Mexicana, leaning on the arm of a fine-looking, middle-aged gentleman, and evidently one of considerable importance.

"*Senor capitan*," spoke the girl, 'my father, Don Estevan Gabella, wishes to thank you for everything.'

"The handsome *hidalgo* extended his hand, and Sam Walker, giving his name, grasped it firmly.

"Young capitan," Don Stevan's English was excellent, 'you may be an enemy of our government and its mad policy, but you are certainly a friend to civilization and order. In the name of the people of Matamoras, I thank you for this protection.'

"Can I be of any further service to you, Don Gabella?"

"You have done your work well. Capitan Walker, and as a slight token of our gratitude, will not you and your men accept our hospitality?"

"By this time the Rangers and the infantrymen were surrounded by a large concourse of ladies and gentlemen, each of whom seemed anxious to extend them some token of gratitude. Don Gabella hastened back to his mansion to make preparations for the reception of the Americans, but his daughter, Bianca, remained beside Sam Walker, holding his horse's bridle while conversing with him upon the events of the past hour. She seemed greatly taken with Sam, and he with her."

Before Walker and his men came out of the great house where they had been entertained, there was an

unwelcome visitor. Booted and spurred, Col. Canales appeared at the feast, and, infuriated to find the American officer an honored guest and tete-a-tete with Bianca, struck the glass of wine from Walker's hand. Quick as a flash, Sam's flinty right fist connected with the Mexican's jaw and felled him to the floor.

"In an instant there was the wildest confusion imaginable. Women shrieked and men drew their weapons for instant use. Canales attempted to rise but Walker pinned him down with the point of his saber.

"At that moment Don Gabella forced his way to Walker's side. 'Peace, gentlemen, in my house and in the presence of ladies.'

"Don Gabella, I was the first assaulted and insulted as your daughter can attest,' said Walker.

"That I admit,' said Canales, 'and on account of the ladies present, I apologize—to them—but to you, senior capitan, may I hope that we can settle our differences at some other time and place?'

"Name your time and place, colonel,' replied Sam Walker shortly.

"To-morrow at noon, at a point outside of Matamoras, of which you will be informed.'

"Your messenger will find me in camp, here,' Walker said, and stepped back, sheathing his saber.

Col. Canales rose, dusting himself with the gauntlets in his belt.

"You shall hear from me!' He strode angrily from the room, the gathered Rangers and infantrymen frowning as he passed.

"That means a duel, senior,' said Bianca.

"I am aware of it, my lady,' Sam nodded with a thin smile.

"But I thought you North Americans never duelled.'

"Sam's smile broadened. 'Oh, yes—on occasion.'

"You are rash, capitan,' said Don Gabella. 'Col. Canales has his bad points, yes, but he is a noted pistol shot and swordsman.'

"Captain Walker held Matamoras, and early the next morning was visited by General Taylor and staff, to whom he reported his action against

the guerrillas and was warmly applauded.

"While he was speaking a Mexican came through the lines, handed a letter to the general and withdrew. Old Rough and Ready read it and glanced sharply at Sam. 'This will never do, Captain Walker, this duel with Canales. Have you received the formal challenge yet?'

"No, sir,' Sam didn't suspect Bianca Gabella of sending that letter until later. She had purposely addressed it to the American commander, seeing him ride into Matamoras with his staff, hoping to prevent the duel because of her fear that Sam might be less than a match for the sword-and-pistol expert.

"It seemed that General Taylor felt that way also. 'You are worth a dozen of him, captain, and should he succeed in killing you it would deprive me of a valuable soldier that I cannot afford to lose. This letter is unsigned—'

"Lieutenant Elam Baxter had been waiting eagerly to speak. 'General, Cap Walker's the challenged party and has a right to chose his weapons. Account of Canales bein' a regular duelist, if he sends a challenge, cap'n can answer he'll meet him with brass six-pounders at a hundred yards.'

"The old general laughed heartily and walked away without making any reply, leaving them to understand that he would not oppose a little fun of that kind, and so Sam and Elam shook hands over it. In the course of an hour the challenge arrived, couched in the most hyperbolic language, and assuring Walker he was ready to meet him anywhere, with any sort of weapons he might name, but suggested a level field on the shore of the Rio Grande, two miles above the city, as a convenient place to fight.

"Walker, who had entered into the sport of the affair, at once replied, accepting the colonel's challenge and naming six-pound brass pieces, at one hundred yards, as the weapons. It is needless to say that Col. Canales was highly enraged at this, but he had written the American officer such a presumptuous challenge that

he felt he couldn't back out now, and so, with curses loud and deep upon the Yankee's trick, he began to make preparations.

"As the noon hour approached, Walker, with Lieutenant Baxter and Sergeant Bolton as seconds, and five members of his Texas Ranger company to drag the field-piece, arrived on the dueling-ground ten minutes ahead of Col. Canales' party.

"Both Baxter and Bolton were more or less used to dueling, and meeting Canales' seconds, they arranged the preliminaries, after several protests by the Mexicans, and finally the ground was marked out, the two cannons placed in position and loaded with solid shot. Walker and Canales were given linstocks and placed at their respective guns.

"Each man stood about a yard from his gun, and each was allowed three minutes to sight it upon the other, after which, at the word 'one,' they were to lift their linstocks, at 'two' they were to hold them over the priming of the guns, and at 'three' were to apply them to the vent-holes.

"Walker had had enough artillery practice to serve a gun, and Canales had not, although the advantage was no more on Walker's part than would have been the part of the wily Mexican had Walker consented to fight with either sword or pistol.

"Each conformed to the clipped speech of the referee, and at 'three' both pieces exploded. Canales' shell whistled wide of Walker, exploded beyond him although he felt the blast of air from it. The shell fired by Sam went to its mark like a Parthian arrow. It seemed to obliterate the Mexican colonel, and Captain Walker stood grimly by his cannon, waiting while the Mexicans grouped about their man.

"Even Baxter and Bolton, accustomed to the horrors of border warfare, looked as if they hadn't expected such a complete removal of the ladrons' leader. The party of Americans were astonished therefore to hear derisive laughter from the Mexicans as they gathered the remains of their fallen principal in a blanket,

placed it in an army ambulance, and taking their gun, hurried by a round-about road back toward Matamoras, leaving the captain and the Rangers standing there in wonderment.

"But presently a Mexican peon in straw sombrero joined them. He, too, was grinning as though something exceedingly funny had taken place, and when questioned, informed them that a trick had been played upon them; that a soldier from the ranks of Col. Canales' lobo riders, dressed like the colonel, had been substituted for Canales and that the colonel had ridden back to Matamoras unharmed.

"'Wal, that may be awful funny for the hombres who rode away,' rumbled Elam Baxter, 'but I wonder what the feller in the ambulance thinks about it.'

"It was worthy of Col. Canales,' Sam Walker said, hot-eyed. 'But we shall meet again.'

But the next time it was under circumstances where Canales surrendered and couldn't be given his come-uppance. This tale of the Mexican War, quite a long serial, goes on to tell of the siege of Monterey and its capture by General Taylor's army; of the heroes of this story "participating in the conquest of California, under General Kearney; joining General Scott, and under his command, taking part in the march to the capital of Mexico, during which time they fought the battles of Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Conteras, Cherubusco, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, San Cosme, Belen Gates and finally, with the victorious Americans, entered the City of Mexico, the former abode of the Montezumas and one of the most beautiful in the world.

And after the war . . .

"Captain Walker—or Major Walker of the United States Army, as he should now be called—was returning with the remnant of his Texas Rangers, whom he had led with so much honor and glory through so many battles and adventures. He was very sad, for at Galveston, Texas, he was to part with them, and as yet they had not reached Matamoras, near the scene of their first exploits together; and besides this there was a certain

Mexican beauty, Bianca Gabella, whom he had met and loved in the earlier stages of the war. What would be his fate in this direction?

"... At Matamoras the leading citizens gave Captain Walker and his Rangers a reception at one of the large halls there. But the event of the evening was when Don Gabella approached Captain Walker, leading his beautiful daughter, and as they melted into each other's arms, he said:

"You love each other and although she is a scion of one of the noblest houses of Spain, who should claim the most beautiful sooner than the bravest of the brave!"

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